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UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 000482

SIPDIS

FOR WHA/PDA, WHA/PPC, WHA/CEN, AND DRL/CRA
FOR IIP/G/WHA AND IIP/T/ES
EMBASSIES FOR PAOS, IOS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT, MARCH 3, 2005

1. On 3/2, the evening television newscast "Abriendo Brecha" on Channel 7 broadcast a statement by Aida Romero, Human Rights Attorney, who said she would ask the U.S. Embassy for the results of its investigation on summary executions, and she complained her office didn't have the assistance of a specialized investigation unit to carry out a more transparent investigation on those cases. It also broadcast an editorial titled "Once again, Honduras held up to public scorn." "The report of the State Department has put Honduras in the spotlight by regarding us as a country where death squads, which include members of the public security forces and paramilitary groups, are responsible of the death of many young people... This kind of report may affect Honduras in many ways."

"We believe that the Honduran government shouldn't limit itself to requesting a verbal clarification. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs should work to prevent these suspicions regarded as a fact by the State Department to be legitimized within the international community."

2. The Tegucigalpa-based liberal daily "La Tribuna" published an editorial entitled "Death Squads?" "The authorities denied that Honduras has death squads executing young people as was pointed out by the latest State Department report on Human Rights."

"To provide an accurate answer to those accusations, the right thing to do now would be to release a report by the police and the Public Ministry on the results of the investigations of all those cases regarded as extrajudicial executions. If the police have investigated all these cases, the government should reveal their progress or their final results. That would be the best answer to those 'reckless' accusations."

3. The Tegucigalpa-based moderate daily "El Herald" ran an editorial entitled "The ironies of human rights." "The U.S., which has historically been one of the world's major human rights violators, has taken upon itself the evaluation of other countries' human rights performance. It is more ironic that high-ranking Honduran officials, representing a government that a year ago submitted a U.S. petition against Cuba to the UNHCR, have said that the report condemning extrajudicial executions in Honduras is 'reckless'."

"The ironies don't end there. The independent organizations which allegedly defend human rights in Honduras have agreed with the findings of the Bush administration, which has recently appointed former U.S. Ambassador to Honduras John D. Negroponte as intelligence chief, knowing he was one of the main supporters of human rights violations in Central America during the 1980s."

"The respect for human rights is imperative, and the Honduran authorities should focus on it, but not necessarily as a result of the accusations of a country whose troops commit all kinds of abuses to the victims of their military occupation, disregarding any national or international laws."

Palmer